

DIRECTORATE OF
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SPAIN: The trial of Basque nationalists which ended with death verdicts for six defendants yesterday has produced at least a temporary shift in the balance of forces within the regime in favor of the military.

Political maneuvering in connection with the trial has given the more conservative elements a new opportunity to gain ground at the expense of the Opus Dei group, which is often described as Catholics interested in greater economic liberalism. This group had gained ascendancy in the cabinet a year ago. Adherents of the Falange and the military have been able, against the wishes of the cabinet, to organize unexpectedly successful proregime rallies throughout Spain. The military appears to have affirmed once again its role as the arbiter of Spain's politics.

Commutation of the death sentences, if they are confirmed by the regional army commander, is a prerogative reserved to Franco, who has always been reluctant to make concessions under pressure. In 1963, when a case involving the death penalty aroused considerable adverse international comment as this case has done, the verdict was carried out. In dealing with the Basques, Franco's decision may be influenced by the reported opposition of some key army figures to the death penalty.

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THE NETHERLANDS: Political battle lines are already being clearly drawn for next April's parliamentary elections.

The opposition Labor Party announced on 23 December that it will not participate in a coalition with the three religious parties after the elections. In November, the religious parties, which with the right-wing Liberals make up the present government, agreed once again to campaign on similar platforms and to stay together either in the next government or in the opposition.

The next coalition will almost certainly include the religious parties, but before last week there had been some question whether they would reconstitute their coalition with the Liberals or seek a broader based government with Labor. The Labor Party's decision not to cooperate with the religious parties appears to guarantee that the present coalition will be revived, albeit with some new faces in important positions.

The major campaign issue will be inflation, and the gulf in thinking between the religious parties and Labor on this problem was accentuated earlier this month. The government was forced at that time to back down on its plan to institute a six-month wage freeze in the face of opposition by the Labor Party and the labor-oriented wings of the religious parties.

By favoring wage increases, Labor hopes to win some votes from the religious parties as well as to buttress the authority of the labor unions which last summer showed some signs of erosion, evident by the eruption of a series of wildcat strikes. For their part, the religious parties appear to be banking on the appeal of their slogan of restraints to the largely traditional-minded Dutch electorate.

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NOTES

CUBA: The six SAM sites that protect the eastern portion of the island have been deactivated.

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[redacted] The reason for the deactivation of these SAM sites is not known, but in any event it has left the eastern portion of Cuba poorly defended. [redacted] some of the SAM equipment may have been moved to the Havana area. [redacted]

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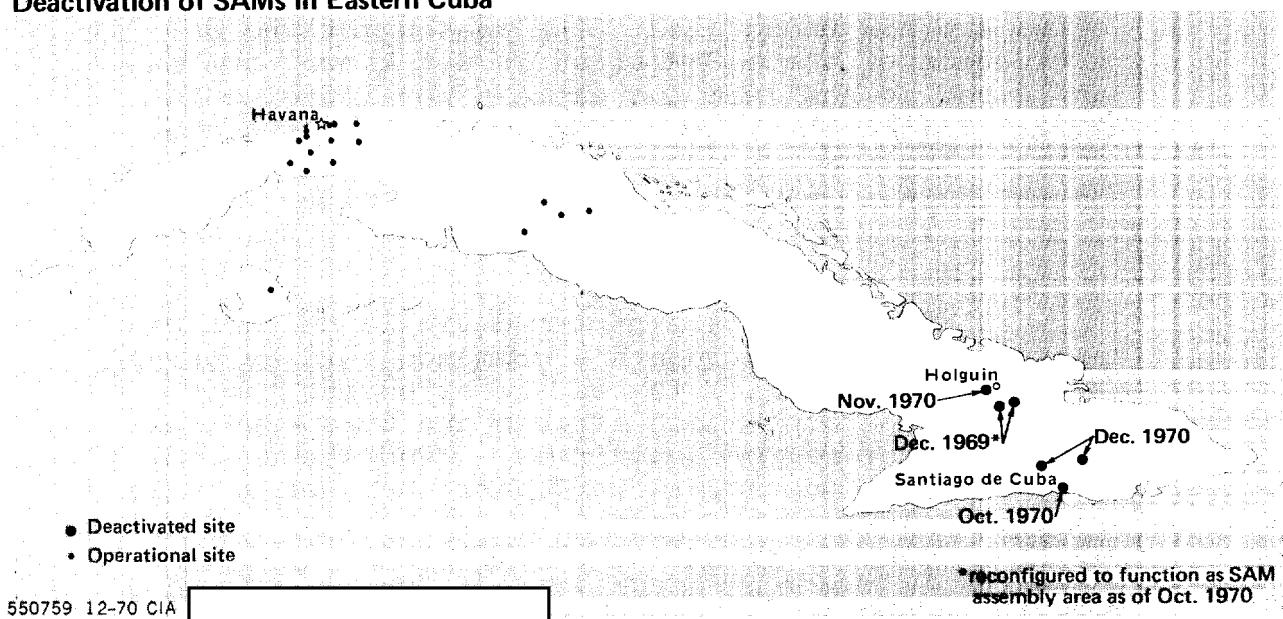
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GUINEA: The state of armed vigilance that has prevailed since last month's commando raid is being maintained. Security forces are extending their roundup of persons--both African and European--suspected of antiregime activities. Even the arrival of two Soviet destroyers in Conakry has not allayed President Toure's continued fears of attack. Toure is personally directing the "mobilization" of the country; he has even established a "war room" and a "high command." [redacted]

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Deactivation of SAMs in Eastern Cuba



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